

# Editorial

## Green-carding the referee, and Haldane's spell

Dear Editor Kasbekar, This is FW, a research fellow from Dr DM's lab at Harvard Medical School. I would like to contribute as a reviewer to review papers for *Journal of Biosciences*. I did my PhD in Dr ML's lab at University of Michigan, where I received extensive training in biochemistry, cell biology, and structural biology. During my PhD, I have published nine papers and one book chapter, including two first-author papers (one *Nature* article in 2007 with more than 240 citations, one *Structure* article in 2010). I have expertise in crystallography, telomere biology, epigenetics, DNA processing, DNA repair, aging, cancer biology, etc. In addition, I have served as a peer reviewer for more than 10 different scientific journals in the United States, Europe and China, including *Nuclear Acid Research* (sic), and the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. Therefore, with my outstanding scientific achievements, as well as adequate experience as a peer reviewer, I believe that I am qualified to serve as peer reviewer at *Journal of Biosciences*. Here I am also attaching my CV with this email, in which you can find all my detailed research experience, professional honors, and publications. Should you have any further questions regarding my experience and information, please let me know. Thank you very much for considering my application! FW

The above email, modified to maintain anonymity, is one of many received in the *Journal of Biosciences* Editorial Office. Two hypotheses account for this barrage of good will: 1, Having gained in stature under the stewardship of yours truly, *Journal of Biosciences* now attracts clamour for a piece of this action from young and energetic investigators at leading research institutions who sign off with a cheery '!'. 2, They clamour instead for a green-card to stay on in the USA, and their still cleverer lawyers have recommended gilding their CVs with referee requests from journals. Sadly, hypothesis 2 also explains why most such emails are from young post-docs in America with foreign-sounding names.

Facts can often have more than one interpretation. Upon learning of his being awarded the Padma Shri, an eminent biologist reportedly said he had assumed until then that such honours only went to people with political connections. He might have spared us this *non sequitur* had he considered the possibility that his award might strengthen precisely this assumption in others. But I did not let such rumination detain me as I wrote to accept the offer of the first 'Haldane Chair' at the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD). While it might be presumptuous to imagine myself the obvious shoo-in for this new position, named after the legendary quick-witted geneticist, polymath, and one-time editor of the venerable *Journal of Genetics*, it wouldn't do to sound pusillanimously diffident either, lest one creates doubt. I have now settled in (since July 3).

James Crow (2009 *J. Biol.* **8** 13) described 'A defence of beanbag genetics' (1964 *Perspect. Biol. Med.* **7** 343–359) as 'Haldane at his best – witty, spirited, informed, interesting and convincing'. I close with its opening sentences: 'My friend Professor Ernst Mayr, of Harvard University, in his recent book *Animal Species and Evolution* [1], which I find admirable, though I disagree with quite a lot of it, has the following sentences on page 263.

*The Mendelian was apt to compare the genetic contents of a population to a bag full of colored beans. Mutation was the exchange of one kind of bean for another. This conceptualization has been referred to as "beanbag genetics." Work in population and developmental genetics has shown, however, that the thinking of beanbag genetics is in many ways quite misleading. To consider genes as independent units is meaningless from the physiological as well as the evolutionary viewpoint.*

Any kind of thinking whatever is misleading out of its context. ...'

DURGADAS P KASBEKAR  
Editor